

Modesty (Part One): Moderation And Propriety

Who Is In Charge of Your Life?

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If biblical headlines were written by today's media, this is what we would probably read:

On the Red Sea crossing:

**WETLANDS TRAMPLED IN LABOR STRIKE—Pursuing
Environmentalists Killed**

On David versus Goliath:

**HATE CRIME KILLS BELOVED CHAMPION—Psychologist
Questions Influence of Rock**

On the birth of Christ

**HOTELS FULL, ANIMALS LEFT HOMELESS—Animal Rights
Activists Enraged by Insensitive Couple**

On feeding the five thousand:

**PREACHER STEALS CHILD'S LUNCH—Disciples Mystified over
Behavior**

On healing the ten lepers:

**LOCAL DOCTOR'S PRACTICE RUINED—"Faith Healer" Causes
Bankruptcy**

On healing the man with the legion of demons:

MADMAN'S FRIEND CAUSES STAMPEDE—Local Farmer's Investment Lost

On raising Lazarus from the dead:

FUNDAMENTALIST PREACHER RAISES A STINK—Will Reading to be Delayed

These headlines help to illustrate a point, and that is that culture is the way that people live their lives. It is the way that they communicate. It is the way that they think and act. It is the way that they eat, drink, and work. The culture of a people reflects the true religion of that people. Their approach to personal relationships reflects the standards and priorities of the people. Those priorities are dictated by their true beliefs—moral or immoral, ethical or unethical, honest or dishonest.

For this reason, it is important to realize that even in how we dress—whether "dressed for success" or "dressed to kill," we reflect that with which we identify. This is especially seen in teenagers because, since they are more emotional than adults, they are more inclined to reflect the mannerisms and clothing of pop artists in film and music and their heroes in sports figures.

By the time one reaches adulthood, the logical part of his brain begins to become more dominant than the emotional part. Those who do not learn to control their emotions are considered immature.

Immature people admire the ways of their idols and try to imitate them. They reflect what they stand for and how they act and dress. Today's idols dress immaturely and often immodestly. You will find that when a nation that goes the way of idolatry—which is what the admiration of idols is, of course—the dress deteriorates as well. This is a very interesting connection.

Cultures that worship nature and treasure sensuality tend to dress immodestly. Those who make idols out of material possessions often become obsessed with the bleeding edge of high fashion. Their fixated style-consciousness leads to dissatisfaction with the status quo. They are not happy unless their wardrobe pushes the limits of modesty.

In sharp contrast, cultures that apply true Christian principles will seek to make personal holiness the driving standard for their dress code. Either you will have either a conscious dress code by design, in which you have thought through the moral implications of your own dress code, or you will have a dress code by default, in which you have let others do your thinking for you and have accepted their decisions. Those who are making those decisions in the fashion world are doing it by design, and they are doing it with intent to lead to their goal.

Until the twentieth century, most professing Christians understood that dress standards were inescapable. However, now even the mainstream Christians, for the most part, have gone over to immodest clothing like plunging necklines, high slits, tight tops, and skimpy shirts. With the rejection of God as lawgiver, the resurgence of the belief that God is not concerned with physical things, and the widespread acceptance of the notion that the Lordship of Christ over human action only extends to "spiritual" matters, many twentieth- and twenty-first-century Christians have simply allowed themselves to be swept away by cultural trends, rather than following the biblical admonition by the apostle Paul to control every thought and action in obedience to Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The real issue in the debate over standards of dress is not between legalism and license, but between God as Lawgiver and man as lawgiver. Who is in charge in your life?

The Bible is a dynamic set of books that have universal and timeless principles for everyday life. The way we dress is an integral part of our way of life. There may be an infinite number of God-honoring approaches to dress that are relative to a specific culture. What must be maintained is the applying of these unchanging principles of scripture to the ever-changing

facets of our cultural circumstances. Continuing throughout all of that is modesty.

What does this have to do with the Feast of Tabernacles? The saints in the Millennium and, more importantly, the Kingdom of God, will be modest. If a person is not modest in his life today, will God not let him into the Kingdom? Well, scripture certainly seems to indicate that. They will not dress immodestly, as some members of the church and some of their children do today.

Modesty, decency, purity, and holiness are essential parts of God's way of life, and they will be an essential part of the thought and action of those in God's Kingdom. We, as the firstfruits of the Kingdom of God—God willing—as the kings and priests in the Millennium must be concerned with moderation and propriety, that is, modesty and holiness.

Is holiness all that important? Where does modesty start?

I Peter 1:13-16 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

It is interesting that throughout scripture, holiness or unholiness is directly associated with the type of clothing worn, in both a physical and a spiritual sense. The word for *holy* is *hagios*, whose root meaning is "different." The Sabbath is *hagios* because it is different from other days. The Christian is *hagios* because he is different from other people. We are God's own people by God's choice. We are chosen to live for God for eternity.

While living in the world, we must obey His law and reproduce His life. As a result, He has laid upon us the duty of being different. As hard as we try in this world to look similar to the world and follow the fashions, we still are to be different. What I mean by that is that we are not to be excessively different. What I mean by that is that we are not to be weird. It sometimes makes a very hard balance for us.

This brings us to a necessary question: What is modesty? Most of us have at least a vague idea of what it includes. However, a vague idea in using the term *modesty*, without grasping its real meaning, leaves one in blind ignorance; and we certainly do not want to be there.

Modern dictionaries offer definitions like these for *modesty*: "Having or showing a moderate estimation of one's own talents, abilities, and values"; "having or proceeding from a disinclination to call attention to oneself; retiring or diffident"; "reserve or propriety in speech, dress, or behavior [the most pointed at the sermon today]"; "free from showiness or ostentation; unpretentious"; "moderate or limited in size, quantity, or range; not extreme: a modest price; a newspaper with a modest circulation."

Noah Webster defines *modesty* as

The lowly temper which accompanies a moderate estimate of one's own worth and importance.... In females, modesty has the like character as in males; but the word is used also as synonymous with chastity, or purity of manners. In this sense, modesty results from purity of mind, or from the fear of disgrace and ignominy fortified by education and principle. Unaffected modesty is the sweetest charm of female excellence, the richest gem in the diadem of their honor.

According to these definitions, then, modesty is a broad concept not limited to sexual connotation. It is a state of mind or disposition that expresses a humble estimate of oneself before God. Modesty, like humility, is the opposite of boldness or arrogance. It does not seek to draw attention to itself or to show off in an unseemly way. Webster apparently links chastity with modesty, because *chastity* means "moral purity in thought and conduct." Moral purity, like humility, will not exhibit sensuality any more than it will exhibit flamboyance.

You may wonder why I am giving this subject so soon after John Ritenbaugh, a couple of years ago, gave his series on "Formality and

Customs." I strongly advise everyone to go back through that because, since then, people—especially younger people—have not paid attention to it in some cases.

As an antidote to the feminine tendency toward extravagant clothing, two New Testament epistles warn against placing unwarranted value on external apparel and commend modesty in clothing. Let us look at both.

According to William Barclay's *Daily Bible Study Series* on I Peter,

In the world of the Greeks and the Romans it is interesting to collect the references to personal adornments. There were as many ways of dressing the hair as there were bees in Hybca. Hair was waved and dyed, sometimes black, more often auburn. Wigs were worn, especially blonde wigs, which are found even in the Christian catacombs; and hair to manufacture them was imported from Germany, and even as far away as India. Hair bands, pins and combs were made of ivory, and boxwood, and tortoise shell; and sometimes gold, studded with gems.

Diamonds, emeralds, topazes, opals and sardonyx were favorite stones.... Earrings were made of pearls and Seneca spoke of women with two or three fortunes in their ears. Slippers were encrusted with them.

Peter did know what he was talking about, as well as being inspired by God in writing this. Since this is a small glimpse of the available opulence of the society at the time of the apostle Peter, we can see why he was addressing the same problems that we have today, those associated with affluence.

I Peter 3:3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel.

The apostle Peter is talking about modesty in dress and moderation in what you do. Jewelry is not necessarily wrong. God adorned His Bride with jewels, as it explains in the prophecy. There is nothing wrong with those specific items but with going overboard and spending too much time preparing yourself with them.

Christianity came into a world of luxury and decadence combined. In the face of all this, Peter warned of the danger of a lack of modesty in adornment. The adornment of the heart is what is precious in the sight of God. Things like modesty, chastity, decency, moderation, self control, and the other fruits of the spirit of Galatians 5:22-23 are all included in that.

A Christian woman of those times, who lived in a society where she would be tempted to senseless extravagance, must live in modesty, selfless service, and goodness. In fact, *all* Christians should be adorned with modesty, humility, and chastity. Timothy also addresses the ladies of the church and explains the adornment of the heart:

I Timothy 2:9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,

It is not necessarily saying that a woman should not braid her hair but that she should not do it in an extravagant way and spend too much time doing it. Several words in I Timothy 2:9 shed light on a biblical view of modesty, which is the same word translated as *good behavior* elsewhere. The word translated *modest* has the general meaning of "respectable and honorable," and when used in reference to women means "modest," here and elsewhere. Adornment and dress is an area with which women are often concerned and in which there are dangers of immodesty or indiscretion. Thus, Paul makes it the focal point of his warning and commands women to adorn themselves in keeping with their Christian duty and responsibility to uphold God's standard of righteousness. First and foremost is living God's way of life in a righteous way.

From this, we see that modesty is an element of Christian character, and our dress will reflect our true attitude toward this revealing aspect of our own characters. We must have the right attitude in order for us to be concerned about modesty and, as a result, to dress modestly. It means we must have a right morality driving us. We have to have a respect for the feeling or concerns of others. I know that a few times when I have come to services, I

have been embarrassed, and I am sure others have, as well. The modest person, therefore, knows the boundaries of God's standard of righteousness and desires to stay within it, and he does not desire to show off.

The word *moderation* in verse 9 is translated *sobriety* in some Bible translations. *Sobriety* has among its meanings the general one of "good judgment, moderation, and self-control," which when seen as a feminine virtue is understood as "decency" or "chastity." *Sobriety* signifies "a command over bodily passions, a state of self-mastery in the area of the appetite." Basically stated, it is self-control over desire.

The basic meaning of the word *moderation* has different nuances and connotations and represents habitual inner self-government. This is why I am not going to go into a lot of specifics in this sermon, because this is a self-government issue. I will give you the principles, and you can apply them with God's influence.

The word *propriety* is translated *shamefacedness* in some Bible translations. It implies feminine reserve in matters of sexuality. Paul's instruction here in I Timothy 2 does not apply only to luxurious, expensive, or gaudy clothing in church, which is, at the very least, a distraction; but Paul also definitely implies the sexual aspect in his choice of words here. Paul's remarks partly refer to female extravagance, but what is probably foremost in his mind is the impropriety of women exploiting their physical charms and the emotional disturbance they are liable to cause their fellow male brethren.

The reason Paul discourages elaborate hairstyles, ornate jewelry, and extremely expensive clothing becomes clear when we look at historical data from his time period. The inordinate time, expense, and effort that elaborately braided hair and jewels demanded was not just an ostentatious display, but it was also the mode of dress of courtesans and harlots at that time. When women dressed like hookers, they were thought of as being hookers, or at least trying to imitate that lifestyle. Today, in our elementary schools, you see seven- and eight-year-olds looking like little miniature hookers. What a sad situation this country is in. It is the excess and sensuality that Paul forbids. Both excess and sensuality bear on modesty. Christian women must self-consciously control their hearts and passions, instead of arraying themselves elaborately, expensively, or sensuously.

Let me ask a rhetorical question: What should a Christian woman's clothing say? Should it say sex, pride, and money? Or should it say purity, humility, and moderation?

I Timothy 3:15 But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The immediate context of Paul's epistle to Timothy regards Christian's behavior and dress in church. The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." Our dress should express the truth in modesty, example, and witness of what a Christian should look like. Therefore, the principles taught for ordering our lives in the worship of God should ultimately guide our daily living in the presence of God.

Can anyone honestly conclude that a woman should dress modestly in the presence of men and God for Sabbath services and the Holy Days only to dress pridefully and sensuously outside of the church's gatherings? Girls, are you so removed from God that you come before the God of the universe dressed pridefully and sensuously?

Paul's instructions to women, like the preceding instructions to men, are related to the context of gathering together in worship and fellowship but are not restricted to it. Men must always live their lives in a way that avoids wrath and dispute; women are always to live in accord with their life of godliness, dressing modestly and discreetly. It is a Christian duty—a requirement, not a suggestion—that we dress modestly. We have a Christian responsibility to wear modest apparel that begins in the context of our reverential worship and that extends from there to our daily living. In sharp contrast, all one has to do is to go to Wal-Mart to see every type of dress: filthy, sloppy, immodest, and (my worst nightmare) spandex. Maybe if you are in the privacy of your own home, exercising it might be all right.

Modesty, therefore, is not first an issue of clothing, but it is primarily an issue of the heart. If the heart is right with God, it will govern itself in purity coupled with humility and will express itself modestly. Where there is self-indulgence and pride reigning within, there will be no modesty and humility

in the outward dress. Though it is true that we may dress modestly from a sinful and prideful motive, we cannot knowingly dress lavishly and sensually from a good one. Thus, we may conclude that the purity and humility of the converted heart internally must ultimately express itself by modest clothing externally.

Since modesty has several meanings we will draw ours from the biblical principle:

Christian modesty is the inner self-government, rooted in a proper understanding of oneself before God, which outwardly displays itself in humility and purity from a genuine love for God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, rather than in self-glorification or self-advertisement. Christian modesty then will not publicly expose itself in sinful lewdness.

God Himself determines the objective standards for sinful nakedness and modesty. Scripture identifies God as Sovereign Creator of all things, as well as the originator and designer of clothing. The biblical account of the origin of clothing and its subsequent examples of dress reveal at least one simple saying: God designed clothing to cover the body, not just the private parts. This is not to suggest a return to the long robes and veils worn in ancient times. It is only to suggest the purpose and function of clothing and the approximate area of the body that clothes were designed to cover.

Genesis 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

We understand that in the beginning, nakedness was not shameful. In fact, Genesis 1:31 says, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." Though Adam and Eve were naked, they felt no sense of public disgrace or humiliation; their nakedness was very good because God created them that way. Under these circumstances, clothing was unnecessary.

Let us look for a moment at how Satan implanted a sense of shame. The Genesis account is very brief and condensed. It merely summarizes, in a few words, these conversations and events. More is said in later passages and in what we glean from history. As soon as Satan got in his lying, deceptive talk,

and the woman had obeyed him in eating the forbidden fruit, and her husband deliberately had eaten it with her, the next verses tell us this:

Genesis 3:7-11 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Who put the sense of shame about sex in the minds of Adam and Eve? It was Satan who had been telling them things having to do with their sexuality and their nakedness. All of the time God had been talking to them, instructing them in true and right knowledge, they were naked. Nothing in all that God taught them gave them any sense of shame toward sex. This idea that sex is evil came from Satan. It was inextricably and subtly tied up with the false "immortal soul" lie! It was a package deal.

As a result of what entered the minds of Adam and Eve, God Himself now clothed them. How, under what circumstances, and why did God clothe them? When God had talked with Adam and Eve immediately following their creation, He was instructing them in a husband and wife situation. As long as they were the only humans, alone on what one might call their honeymoon (so far as any other humans are concerned), God gave them no instruction to cover their bodies. Just in case somebody draws a conclusion, I am not advocating nakedness at home just with you and your wife. As I will get to later, clothing has other purposes, and one is to protect you from the cold. In the ministry, we have to qualify things constantly, it seems. It never ceases to amaze me how conclusions are jumped to.

God is present at all times. When a husband and wife, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, are alone in their home, God is invisibly present. It was not until Satan introduced the idea that they became ashamed to be in front of God.

God Himself clothed Adam and Eve. Notice what is recorded later in the same chapter:

Genesis 3:20-21 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

Notice the expression, "The Lord God... clothed them." The Hebrew word God inspired Moses to write here for *clothed* is *labash*. It does not mean to cover shamefulness—to purposefully hide nakedness—or any such meaning. The Hebrew word meaning "to conceal nakedness" is *kasha*, but the word that Moses was inspired by God to write is *labash*. It means "the donning of apparel, raiment." It refers rather to outer garments than underclothing. It implies the idea of adorning, or decorating, or displaying or protecting, rather than concealing or covering over or hiding.

For example, in the incident of Noah's drunkenness in Genesis 9, he apparently had been sexually violated by Canaan, son of Ham. Shem and Japheth, also sons of Noah, backed up with a garment on their shoulders and "covered the nakedness" their father. They were hiding and concealing the result of a sinful act. Here the Hebrew word for *covered* is *kasha*, not *labash*, which is used by God in how He covered Adam and Eve.

Notice God did not *kasha* Adam and Eve—did not hide shamefulness, conceal nakedness—but rather He *labashed* them—adorned and clothed them. The difference between the two Hebrew words, *labash* and *kasha*, is one of purpose and intent rather than the fact of being covered. Both do cover nudity. The Hebrew *kasha* carries the connotation of concealing or hiding something that might be shameful, while *labash* includes no such meaning and implies adding attractiveness rather than hiding shamefulness. It is interesting what God's approach was compared to what man's is.

In other words, although God's clothing did cover their bodies, it did not imply any sense of shame in what God designed. The reason is not that the pubic region, which God designed and made, is degrading or evil, but rather as a matter of protection from the weather or environment and for proper modesty and decorum! It is a matter of propriety—of courtesy to others—that we take care of eliminating waste privately. This does not imply that

there is sin or evil in going to the bathroom. It is a matter of etiquette—consideration for others—rather than to cover up something wrong.

In the same manner, God wills that we wear clothes as a matter of decorum and propriety in consideration of others and to avoid temptation that could lead to sinful wrong use—but not because the sex organs which God designed are themselves evil. God designed sex for use only between a husband and wife together in a loving relationship, unshared with any other. The very privacy of this marriage relationship makes it sacred, makes husband and wife dear to each other in a very special way never shared with another in adultery. You teenagers and young adults need to take warning here.

This entire loving, sacred, precious relationship is greatly impaired or destroyed when shared with any other. That is why premarital sex and adultery are so harmful to their participants and, therefore, capital sins. For those of you young people who do not know what a capital sin is, it is a sin that is punishable by death. It means you get the death penalty—maybe not right away, but eventually you do.

The reason for avoiding indecent or lewd exposure is that this type of exposure of the female body is lust-arousing to the carnal male mind. Burlesque shows, striptease acts, and all such commercial exhibitions are deliberately intended to attract male admissions for profit through lust. Welcome to Satan's world! There is *Wayne's World*, there is *Waterworld*, and there is Satan's World! Guess where we live.

The origin of the concept that sex is evil and shameful originated with Satan—not with God! The pagan world accepted this lie. As a teaching or doctrine, it became a universally-accepted dogma. This is what God says to those who follow Satan's lie about sex and immodesty:

Isaiah 57:3-4 "But come here, you sons of the sorceress, you offspring of the adulterer and the harlot! Whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth and stick out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, offspring of falsehood,

Isaiah 57:7-9 on a lofty and high mountain you have set your bed; even there you went up to offer sacrifice. Also behind the doors and their posts you have set up your remembrance; for you have uncovered yourself to those other than Me, and have gone up to them; you have enlarged your bed and made a covenant with them; you have loved their bed, where you saw their nudity. You went to the king with ointment, and increased your perfumes; you sent your messengers far off, and even descended to Sheol.

God does not think very much of people who uncover their nakedness, either physically or spiritually. The knowledge of Adam and Eve's sin transformed their experience of good nakedness into humiliating shame. Blushing and disgrace entered human history, but we can be thankful that the story does not end there. In His great mercy, God provided the perfect clothing.

The main point is in the spiritual application. Adam and Eve lost their righteous standing with God and were naked in their sin. God then killed animals and fashioned coats of skins to perfectly cover Adam and Eve after they pitifully attempted to cover themselves with aprons devised by their own human minds and made with their unskilled human hands.

This beautiful type of God's mercy and grace was later fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. An important lesson that we should learn in this is that our first parents made their first garments of inferior material unsuitable for clothing. God made the next, which were very effective because of their superior quality, being made from the finest material for clothing known to mankind.

Known for strength, warmth, comfort, and beauty, animal skins are still considered the finest material for human clothing. I bought a sheepskin coat about ten years ago; and after I wore it a few times, it molded itself to my body. It is still a very comfortable and warm covering for me, and it has lasted better than any other coat.

In God's covering of Adam and Eve, we may learn the utter insufficiency of our own righteousness to cover spiritual nakedness and the absolute necessity of the righteousness of God, the imputed righteousness, with its fitness in every way to cover our sins. God used this literal event to teach us

a spiritual truth. He replaced Adam and Eve's loincloths with tunics of skin. Although Adam covered his loins, God covered him from his neck to his knees.

This is not insignificant, since the work of Adam's hands was not acceptable to God either spiritually (that is, his works of righteousness) or physically (that is, in his covering of his nakedness); only the covering that God Himself provided was sufficient for both. While Adam covered his privates, God covered Adam's body. Though we have no snapshots of Adam and Eve's apparel, the word *coats* is consistently used throughout the Old Testament to mean a tunic-like garment.

According to Nelson's *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*,

The tunic was a long piece of cloth folded in half, with holes for the arms and head. Also known as the inner garment, it was worn under the mantle, or outer garment. The tunic was generally made of leather, haircloth, wool, or linen. Jesus' tunic at the crucifixion was from one piece of cloth, since it had no seam (John 19:23). Women as well as men wore a tunic, often blue in color. Other words for tunic, used by various English translations, are coat and shirt.

Coat in Genesis 3:21 is *kuttonet*, from a root meaning "to cover." You could not call a bikini a *kuttonet*.

Genesis 3:21 Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

The *kuttonet* was the ordinary garment worn by man and woman as seen in the tunics of skin worn by Adam and Eve. This shirt-like garment usually had long sleeves and extended to the ankles when worn as a dress coat.

According to the Zondervan *Pictorial Bible Dictionary* under the article "Dress": "Hard working men, slaves, and prisoners wore them more abbreviated, sometimes even up to their knees, and without sleeves."

Several well-known lexicons and Bible encyclopedias say that it was the principle ordinary garment of men and woman. The garment of which they are speaking is next to the skin, the undergarment. It was a long, shirt-like garment usually of linen. Adam's was made of animal skin.

The *kuttonet* resembled the later Roman tunic corresponding closest to our long shirt, reaching below the knees. In some cases, it was designed for dress occasions, reaching almost to the ground, while the simplest kind was sleeveless, reaching only to the knees. Another description tells us that it was made of linen or wool and reached down to the knees or to the ankles. All these sources agree regarding the *kuttonet*, that it covered the body from at least the neck to the knees, while sometimes reaching mid-calf or all the way to the feet. It is important to realize that this style of clothing corresponds to what human beings have worn as far back in history as we have record. It takes us back thousands of years. For millennia, modest people have covered themselves from at least just below the neck to the knees.

This was probably God's design for covering Adam and Eve's nakedness and shame. In other words, God did not give a fur bikini to represent our righteousness and salvation. Moreover, this was not the only time God used this design.

Jesus Christ is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. A fair and wise question then would be, "When God became man, what did He wear?" Let us look at the ultimate example for men. Here is one minister's opinion of how Jesus looked. This quote is from an excerpt of the book *The Real Jesus* by Garner Ted Armstrong (copyright 1977). He tried, as best he could, to use scripture and historical accounts to show what Christ probably wore or looked like.

Jesus had average facial texturing and coloring, with average length hair. We might call His hair length "mod" today, since that was the cultural norm at the time—somewhat longer than the hair styles of the 1940s and 1950s and somewhat shorter than the longhaired hippie look of the 1960s.

There is no doubt that Jesus wore a full, yet neatly trimmed and well-groomed beard. (It would be almost impossible to argue around the fact that Isaiah's prophecy said that He "gave his cheek to those who pluck the hair" by alleging it was only a day and a half's growth to which they applied pinchers or tweezers.) Beards were the custom of the time, and there is no reason to assume that Jesus appeared smooth shaven.

There were both hot and cold springs in the areas where Jesus lived and worked, and you can be absolutely sure that the great God who so insisted upon cleanliness in the camp of Israel, who gave and made a matter of law the most rigorous attention to personal and communal hygiene, would have followed the practice of daily bathing, meticulous grooming of His person, trimming of the hair and beard, and deliberate choice of His clothing. All with care and concern, but totally devoid of fetish and obsession.

It is important to note that even Jesus' outer garments were of such quality that the Roman soldiers were industriously gambling for even His undergarments at the foot of His crucifixion stake.

His outer garments consisted of a coat or cloak which was seamless and, one is tempted to assume, was not unlike Joseph's coat of many colors.

Perhaps it was plain, perhaps it had tribal colors or decorations, but at any event, it was in commonplace good taste and of fine quality, just like any number of dark suits worn by businessmen at dinners today.

A lack of showiness in this dress would have been one of the reasons that Jesus managed on several occasions—prior to God's own appointed and intended time—to elude His pursuers in the riotous melee of a swirling mob of people.

How could Jesus have so escaped His attackers if He looked distinctly different from the other people of His day? Surely a pasty-

white face, exceedingly long hair and a glowing, golden halo could have been easily spotted.

No, Jesus was plain. And it was only His similarity in physical appearance (a beard certainly helps when there are hundreds of them about) as well as the similarity of the garments He wore that enabled Him to lose Himself in a crowd "passing by in their midst" and thereby succeed in escaping.

The quality of clothing was extremely fine in first-century Palestine.

Housewives still speak of "sheets of linens" today, though mostly they are really speaking about cheaper cottons and synthetics. But, the purchase of fine handmade linens can be a costly acquisition indeed.

Linen was handmade and was durable enough to last for many years during Jesus' day.

Many other kinds of fabrics were worn by the people of that country and the Bible speaks of velvets, purples, fine linens, and many kinds of personal clothing, as well as draperies and tapestries.

Jesus' inner garments would have been of lightweight cotton, linen and/or wool. The outer coat was almost surely wool.

The real Jesus epitomized what God would look like as a man—well groomed, but not affected, well dressed but not clothes-conscious, clean but not antiseptic, dignified but not "distinguished."

That was one man's opinion, but I thought that it was at least worth giving that to you.

Jesus Christ in the flesh covered Himself in the same way that He covered Adam and Eve: modestly, in moderation and propriety. What we have talked about so far is that we live in a world ruled by Satan, in which excess and sensuality has run rampant since Adam and Eve first sinned and needed to be

properly clothed by God. Both excess and sensuality bear on modesty. We saw what Jesus Christ wore as a man. Now let us see what He wears in His glorified state.

Revelation 1:13 And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

I am not advocating us going over to robes. I am not going to say what we should wear, but these are the principles. Apply them in your lives as you will, as God wills.

What is the clothing of the saints in the Kingdom of God?

Although Revelation 3:1-6 has been attributed at times exclusively to the Sardis church or era, that interpretation is much too limited. I agree with that interpretation, but there is much more to it than that. If we start in verse 2, rather than verse 1, and simply substitute the term the *Church* where the term *Sardis* is translated, we get a broader application of this passage that is directed at the entire Church of God in every era and at all times.

Revelation 3:2-6 "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

"He who overcomes" shall receive the same reward as they who "have not defiled their garments" in verse 4—the two are identical. Whoever overcomes sin and the temptations of this world, will be admitted to a glorious reward. The promise is made not only to those in Sardis who should

be victorious but to all in every age and everywhere. The hope that is held out before us is that of appearing with Jesus Christ our Redeemer in His Kingdom, clothed in robes expressive of holiness and joy.

Revelation 6:11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

The white robe given to each one of the saints is an emblem of purity, innocence, and triumph. Here, the robes would be an emblem of their innocence as martyrs, of the divine approval of their testimony and lives; a pledge of their future holiness; and a banner of their triumph over sin, Satan, the world, and their own human nature.

Revelation 7:9-14 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The saints cleanse and purify their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Under the ancient ritual, various things about the sanctuary were cleansed from ceremonial defilement by the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice on them. In accordance with that usage, the blood of the Lamb—of Jesus Christ—cleanses and purifies. John sees a great group of beings with white robes.

The way by which the white robes become white or pure is by the blood of the Lamb. John does not say they were made white as the result of their sufferings or their afflictions but by the blood of the Lamb.

It is not the great deeds or the sufferings of the saints that provides them with white robes to wear. It is not their own sufferings and trials, their persecutions and sorrows, that make them holy but the blood of the Lamb that had been shed for sinners. Of course, as Christians in God's church, we have our part, responsibility, and duty to overcome sin. The way by which the white robes become white or pure is the blood of the Lamb. They are the emblems of innocence, righteousness, and purity.

In Revelation 19:13, we see an entourage of Christ that are holy, innumerable, heavenly, judicial, royal, and pure. These are the glorified saints whom God will send with Christ at His Second Coming. These will be both the living transfigured saints and those raised and meeting Christ in the air.

Revelation 19:11-16 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

There we see a picture of what Christ and the saints who will return with Him will wear. They will be very modest garments, royal and pure, representing righteousness as well.

Obviously, the Bible offers us a standard for covering the body. From the coats God gave to Adam to the garments of Jesus Christ and to the clean,

white robes of the saints in glory, we have a consistent testimony. The Old and New Testaments reveal that God's earthly and heavenly people wore garments that covered them from at least just below the neck area to the knee. We, as Christians, have a standard for covering our bodies, especially when we are gathered to worship the living God.

For those of you prone to jumping to conclusions, I am not advocating a return to robe-like garments. I am trying to present to you principles for the function of clothing in its relation to modesty. Adam and Eve, Jesus Christ, and the glorified saints all point to one clear fact: God's people should be covered. It is difficult to assign fixed limits to proper dress. It is obvious from scriptural accounts that proper clothing should cover more of the body than just the private areas. In coming before God in worship, of course, the standard is higher.

The principle is that everything in dress should be in accordance with moderation and propriety, that is, with self-control and modesty. The attitude of decency and humility is needed to be able to make right decisions in choosing our clothing standards. It should not be offensive to others because it is immodest.

What a wonderful truth we have before us to prepare us, as kings and priests, for Christ's return and the Kingdom of God. We will be clothed in rich white robes in God's Kingdom. Other forms of clothing are not mentioned; but because God likes variety, there will probably be variations of that attire. What we do know is that it will be modest in how it covers the saints made in the image of God.

The next time I speak, I am going to get into more of the practical application of what I gave you this morning. We will look at the real impact the clothes designers have had on this society and, sadly, on the church. We will see what God has to say about nakedness, lewdness, and shame. Did you know that you might have been unclothed without even knowing it? What do we have to put on to be spiritually clothed? As future kings and priests in the Kingdom of God, we certainly want to make sure that we do not have filthy priestly garments now! We need to be preparing now for what is coming.